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ABSTRACT

The problems created by declining enrollments and fiscal stringencies have brought about a "new reality" for postsecondary institutions in Ontario and other Canadian provinces. The lean future that institutions face requires clear articulation and communication of institutional goals, retraining and reallocation of redundant academic staff, cost-effective instructional methods, new formulae for financing higher education, and inter-institutional cooperation. On a system-wide basis, an agency is needed that has enough concern to make difficult decisions, and enough authority to implement them. On a more localized level, entrenched academic traditions, excessive departmental autonomy, and outdated organizational structures represent significant obstacles to the problem-solving capabilities of the institutions. A cohesive plan for Educational Development, which includes organizational, staff, and instructional development, can provide an effective program for individual and institutional renewal. The underlying concept of Educational Development is cooperative, fluid, internally consistent activity at all levels of the institution. Programs dealing with professional needs, programs related to instructional concerns, and activities concerning the myriad of organizational problems must be interrelated and incorporate "partnership problem-solving" to adequately confront and resolve the problems of the new reality. (DR)

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THE NEW REALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION:
THE AGONY AND ECSTASY OF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Having lived with fifteen years or so of rapid expansion in the number of post-secondary institutions and in student enrolment our demographer-colleagues tell us to expect a quick and substantial decline in enrolment and our politicians are telling us to expect less funds for post-secondary education. The phrase "new reality", and its use in the context of higher education has become the vogue expression to characterize the current and projected situation of declining enrolments and of shrinking resources available for post-secondary education in Ontario and in other provinces as well. As far as I can tell this phrase was coined in a letter written to presidents of all Ontario universities by the chairman of the Ontario Council for University Affairs, an advisory body established by the Ontario government to represent the "public interest." In this letter, the presidents were asked: "the Council would like to know of any plans you have to cope with the 'new reality.' With restricted funding and declining enrolment upon us, are savings possible by the merging of one institution with another or through the merging of certain specific services such as libraries, computing, campus planning, other administrative support services and even teaching in geographically proximate institutions or indeed system-wide?" We <u>are</u> faced with a known decline in the number of births in this and other provinces. Since most of this decline in births had occurred by 1968, our universities and colleges will suffer enrolment drops even more compressed and disruptive than those which have shaken the elementary schools and which now, in turn, are beginning to throw the secondary schools into disarray. Unless the university

participation rates move upward, and unfortunately all signs point to a decline in these rates as well as in the size of the pool of potentially available students, or the universities tap a much larger and new pool (presumably adults in part-time courses, although the competition between the community colleges and the universities will be fierce in the struggle for survival), our university system faces the prospect of a drop in total enrolment in Ontario of between 22,000 and 30,000 by 1996. While there may be a welcome relief, although slight and short-lived, from the steady erosion during the period of 1987 - 1991 (the number of births was higher in 1969, 1970, and 1971), that period could well be the "eye of the hurricane" since the number of births has dropped again since 1971 and remains low despite the ever increasing number of potential parents who have by now reached their most fertile reproductive period (ages 18 to 32 years). As for the future, one need simply note that those born in such large numbers in 1946 will be 32 years old this year and have not had as many children as anticipated. As those of you in the colleges will know, the participation rates in the CAAT's are currently holding their own while the participation rates in the university sector are down this year.

It is very likely then, that our universities and colleges will face a lean future for the rest of this century in terms of enrolment (many of our graduates of 1993 have already been born and we can count them), and all the present signs point to a continued shrinkage into the next century. To give you an indicator of the financial picture, according to the Council of Ontario Universities "recent statements by the Treasurer of Ontario predict an annual increase in government support for the universities over the next

three to four years in the range of 4.5% to 5.8%. If the lower figure is taken and tuition fees remain frozen, the universities will have to reduce their staff by more than 16% by 1981 to balance their budgets. This would mean 2,000 fewer faculty as well as a proportionate decrease in the number of support staff."

The situation then, in which decisions about problems facing colleges and universities in Ontario (and beyond) will be made, is one of declining enrolments and restrictive funding due to recessionary pressures and severe competition for tax dollars from other sectors.

While declining enrolments and shrinking resources should not be viewed as causally related, and should be treated as separate phenonema, their coincidence in time is already proving more than a mild threat to the status quo of our post-secondary system in Ontario.

It is apparent to many that the need for the development of effective approaches to problems in higher education has never been more urgent. In the midst of this chaotic scramble for survival, programs for professional development, instructional development, and institutional renewal are in a most unusual situation. While some people feel that many of the difficult problems created by this "new reality" would be served well by these programs, support for them--moral and financial--has never been more difficult to come by. In the remainder of this brief paper I shall review what I believe are some of the key problems and issues in higher education in Ontario and outline what I believe are the current obstacles to implementing effective solutions. I will suggest a few changes which are needed in the system and a vehicle for bringing these changes about. I will conclude by discussing educational development in the context of the 'new reality'. Although Ontario is the

crucible for my observations, I am aware that these problems are being faced in other provinces and in several european countries and the U.S. as well. In addition, you will note that many of my comments are based on problems currently facing the universities. The same pressures are and will continue to bear on the colleges and though the effects of the new reality on the colleges may be less visible, we must begin looking at our post-secondary system as a whole in order to address some of the issues with which we are concerned.

Some of the Issues

In specific terms, what should the goals of our post-secondary system be? A simple rather obvious question for most of us, but can we meaningfully answer it clearly enough to aid us in sound institutional planning and for making decisions for a system which currently has 22 community colleges, 15 universities and one polytechnic? Our Higher Education Group is currently conducting a Goals Analysis Project in order to determine the various ways in which universities communicate within the institution, and to others, their goals and intentions concerning the allocation of resources to accomplish specific teaching, research, and community related outcomes. Obviously, we are interested in more than the "motherhood" statements which take up space in university calendars. In order to really understand institutional goals one must analyze in detail annual reports of departments and faculties and study carefully the decisions of budget/planning committees. Of special concern to us is the discrepancy and/or congruence between stated goals and appropriation of resources for those goals.

As you might well imagine, attempting to determine in specific and operational terms how institutions communicate what goals is interesting work and while we're finding the project a challenge the work is probably better suited to the talents of Scotland Yard.

While analyzing goals will enable us to judge in a more realistic manner where institutions are moving, it does not, of course, shed any light on where they should be moving. For example, some observers believe that community colleges are becoming more like universities, universities are becoming more like community colleges, and everyone is, almost through "immaculate reception" after the adult learners market. Have all of our various institutions including universities, community colleges, and even secondary schools become so general in nature, so unselective, so universal in capacity and genuine interest that we are capable of being all things to all people in order to survive. Meaningful survival of our institutions depends clearly on doing what we do well and those of us that work in a particular college or university can do more for that institution by systematically readdressing and reaffirming our respective "raison d'etre" than anything else. I'm not suggesting that new goals should not be articulated and old goals abandoned, but these decisions must be based on more serious and specific considerations about the institution's resources and position in a larger context which includes other institutions and a variety of societal needs.

This leads us to a related question. Once a ticulated, how can we effectively communicate the goals of higher education, our success in achieving them, and the residual economic, social and cultural benefits to the public?

Perhaps we *should* ignore the newspaper editorials which imply the diminished role of our universities in society. But should we dismiss the letters to the editor? In point of fact, large numbers of people simply do not understand the goals and benefits of higher education.

Fair enough. As pointed out before, we must first do a better job of this ourselves. But the public does not understand even in general terms, the true nature of our universities. Note, for example, this excerpt from this year's annual report of OCUA:

> *To view the universities solely as teaching institutions is a major error. The university has many functions which are not related directly to the number of students . . . of course, teaching is important but so are the research, scholarship, and public service aspects of the university. The university provides much of the research that is done in Canada and is a source of specialized services to governments at all levels, industry, and the public. It is the university that generates much of the criticism of established beliefs through scholarship and the search for knowledge.*

With inflation increasingly burdening the average citizen and more easily understood programs dealing with health and social welfare requiring tax dollars, public support for the less tangible benefits of higher education has diminished. The disturbing thing is that a much larger percentage of that public has become "consumers" of higher education than twenty years ago. How do *they* feel about the real benefits of higher education? How well have we articulated to our university students the goals of a liberal education? How well have we provided that education? How well have we communicated to our university undergraduate students the university as a research setting? In my view, the answer to the public relations question lies primarily within our own curriculum, our methods of teaching, and generally, the problem of

clarifying for future citizens the idea of the university or the nature of a particular college. Hiring public relations specialists to counteract and/or make use of the media will never achieve the power of the personal experience to be gained by those who attend our institutions.

Without discussing them here, I believe we need to address the following questions as well:

- How can we make effective decisions about institutional goals, staffing (both academic and support staff), programs, and finance during a period of restraint?
- How can we effectively retrain and reallocate redundant academic staff for newly identified needs within and outside of the post-secondary system.
- How can we develop alternative cost-effective instructional methods?
- How can we develop inter-institutional cooperative activity which maintains quality and reduces costs? I am referring here to cooperation between colleges and universities as well as among the universities and among the CAAT's.
- How can we develop and implement new and sound formulae for financing higher education in a period of declining enrolment and fiscal restraint?
- How do we deal with the effects of not being able to hire new members of staff? (known as the aging professorate problem)

A Few Problems...

Some of you might feel it appropriate for me or others to answer some of these questions. I am certain that many of you have opinions about these issues. I have some and I intend to share some of them with you. But before I do, I must spend a few moments discussing the *collective ability* of those of us in the post-secondary system to both answer these questions *and* to implement appropriate solutions. Do we have an effective forum for this dialogue and decision-making in the first place? Potentially, perhaps; in practice, I have serious doubts. Many of these obstacles are obvious but I feel that a quick review is in order.

One of the major difficulties we have takes the form of the *academic traditions* we wish to protect while this is less of a problem in the colleges, "academic freedom" and the resultant position of "autonomy" which is held within the universities (e.g., by departments within faculties) and for the universities by those outside the universities (e.g., government) may cause us the most difficulty. As that old saying goes, "We have met the enemy and it is us."

While the government officials and agencies (e.g., Ministry of Colleges and Universities, Ontario Council for University Affairs) respect this autonomy, they properly expect responsible and accountable decisions by the universities in return for government's investment of both funds and "freedom".

Faced with a need for financial restraint, government is already providing less than what the universities feel is required; but in the name of "autonomy", universities have not been told <u>how</u> to cut back. For

the time being, universities have been asked, not told, what they might do about reducing staff, merging programs, and cooperating with other institutions in order to reduce costs.

Note the recent comments of the Ontario Minister of Colleges and Universities:

> *It is now a management job within the universities to use to best advantage the very considerable amount of public funding they receive. Universities have been diligent in trimming costs. However, my admiration for their diligence must be tempered by the realization that university faculty strength increased by nearly 900 full-time members between 1973-74 and 1976-77, adding the equivalent of a faculty such as that of McMaster University to Ontario's university system. These additions were made despite predictions of declining enrolment.*
>
> *I can understand the desire of the universities to maintain strong faculties. They set their own priorities. But they must also figure out how to pay their way within the funds available...*
>
> *When tough decisions are needed, it's tempting to demand increased government involvement in setting the future direction and policies of the universities. But to start down that road--and I shall resist such a move every step of the way--is for the universities to abandon their essential academic freedom. If others insist on government involvement, they will find that government becomes empowered to question and regulate all aspects of university operations. Government scrutiny might fall, for example, on the rights of faculty members to tenure; the extent of university research; and how many new faculty should be hired, and who they should be. This is not government's role--nor should it ever be.*

Respect for "academic autonomy" is, of course, found within the universities as well. For example, many university budget planning committees, whose task it is to make decisions about how to handle "less money than required", typically make no substantive decisions about institutional goals and priorities; they merely decide on a global financial decision which keeps the "lid" on for another year. Backed by more than a century of academic freedom, this survival approach to decisions does not interfere with faculties' and departments' rights to self determination of *what to research and teach*; it simply passes on the "cutback" problem

to the departments (e.g., University X policy for next year: 3% cuts for all budget units and elimination of all one year appointments). In some cases, budget units *are* analyzing goals, priorities, and resources and are involved in effective academic planning. In many cases, however, department heads and deans are cutting where they *can* cut, not necessarily where they *should* cut. This further underscores the need for well defined institutional goals and a decision-making structure to facilitate them. One needs little imagination to envision the destiny of this current survival mentality approach to making decisions. Removing light bulbs, closing libraries early to save on utilities and support staff, cutting back on instructional improvement and student counselling programs, non-rehiring of those on one year contracts and firing a few secretaries and the like, will be as effective as cosmestic surgery is for heart disease. Those of you in the colleges who have envied the autonomy of the universities, envy no more.

In addition to the academic traditions which unfortunately tend to reinforce this survival decision-making, rather than question it, the *structures of our institutions* (which reflect these traditions) also make institutional (and system wide) dialogue on goals and priorities difficult. A structure which includes faculty associations, with understandable concerns for the security of its membership and "strong" departments with independence of thought and power to determine divergent goals and priorities, does not appear to provide the most conducive milieu for institutional planning in a time of restraint.

In responding to an earlier draft of this paper, one Ontario university president made the following comments:

> *A number of the universities have been engaged in the difficult process of trying to sort out priorities and to reconcile the aspirations of various divisions with some overall institutional set of objectives and priorities. This has been an intensely time-consuming process and unfortunately, the results are much less dramatic than many of us would have hoped. The reason is the immobility of the principal resource in the university--the faculty members. With career appointments, the opportunity to cut back in areas that are relatively weak is seriously impaired. The response to falling enrolment is also much less flexible than it ought to be.*
>
> *I do believe that the whole process of planning is extremely important but it will be afflicted with a great sense of frustration if there is no way of translating these plans into reality because of the fixed nature of our operating expenditures. Most of the universities are well along in the process of trimming the fat and squeezing as much as they can out of an increasingly constrained operating budget. The area that remains most resistant to the types of changes which really are necessary over the next five or six years is the academic salaries budget.*

I think you would agree that a similar situation exists within the colleges.

A final difficulty might be labelled *attitudinal*. In my discussions with many administrators, teachers and researchers in Ontario universities and colleges during the past several months, attitudes expressed by my colleagues about the problems of the "new reality" can be roughly categorized into three groups: the "what problems?" group; the "problems will pass" group; and the "doom and gloom" group. It is surprising to note the number of our colleagues who are simply not aware of the problems facing higher education today. I can understand why some of my friends in the CAAT's do not realize the problem we face--participation rates are not down, enrolment is healthy and all is well...*for the time being*. I cannot, however, understand the ostrich-like response of many of

my university colleagues. Less surprising are those who are aware that we have difficulties but feel "we've had problems before and these, too, shall pass...". Indeed this group has some distinguished members. Another Ontario president recently made this comment:

> *. . . we have had these similar complications again and again during the past century. We must expect that they will recur during the next century. In particular, I would urge most strongly that we should not be unduly impressed or depressed by the immediate problems of the next few years, such as those which quite properly preoccupy our various technical advisors. In due course, even on the short run, things will sort themselves out.*

The third group is a creation of the first two groups and includes anyone who claims that "we have serious problems ahead and unless we deal with them creatively and quickly, others (e.g., politicians) will have to make decisions for us." By default, I suppose I would be placed in this group by members of the other groups.

The "Ideal Reality?"

Enough said about the "new reality", what about the post-secondary system in Ontario in the year 1983 or 1985 (no one wants to mention 1984 in this context); what *should* the system look like?

In my opinion, the "ideal reality" should have the following characteristics:

1. There *should* be three to five fewer autonomous universities; this to be accomplished by both mergers and closures. (Unlikely due to political considerations; I said "ideal reality" didn't I?)
2. There should be additional "polytechnic" opportunities to be accomplished through transformation of one of the institutions referred to above and cooperative university/college programs.

3. Strong role differentiation for the remaining universities.
4. At least two remaining universities now offering graduate programs, would cease to offer graduate studies.
5. Status-quo concerning the number of colleges.
6. A financing formula which will be sensitive to quality and role differentiation as well as student enrolment.
7. A comprehensive professional development program for retraining redundant staff for positions within and outside of post-secondary education.
8. A plan to ensure a certain percentage of positions to be reserved for young teachers, scholars, and researchers each year.
9. Greater opportunity for students to "mix and match" university and college resources to obtain individualized programs suited to their needs (e.g., credit for experience, increased transferability).

Decision-Making Authority

As I mentioned before, many of you have your own opinions as to the status quo of our university system and/or changes which should come about. While I could take up time defending my opinions about what should be, I will not. I believe that the most important thing for us to agree upon is how we deal with our current and projected situation.

I've raised many questions in this paper and provided few answers but here is one of the most crucial questions: Are the problems created by declining enrolments and fiscal stringencies solvable by the same institutional, system, and political structures that were designed to solve problems created by the period of expansion during the 60's?

No, they are not. The universities need an agency which is knowledgeable about the problems we face, has enough concern for the entire system to make difficult decisions, has important input from the college sector, and most important, has the authority to implement its decision. I would recommend an OCUA-like agency with legislative authority to carry out the results of its deliberations concerning quality of programs, role differentiation, and funding. The membership would include strong representation (e.g., 40%) from the university community with these members chosen by the Council of Ontario Universities (COU); in addition, two members would represent the colleges and would be chosen by the Council of Regents or the Committee of Presidents of the CAAT's; finally, a slight majority of the membership would be from the outside of the university/college system and would be chosen by the Ministry of Colleges and Universities.

The politicians are getting a bit nervous about the autonomy of the universities and while they are not going to appear to make the tough decisions, they are certainly concerned that they be made. During the past six months, the Minister of Colleges and Universities has emphatically denied any role for government in helping the universities make decisions. Two weeks ago the Minister sent a letter to the chief executive of each university. In this letter he said:

> . . . the Honourable Darcy McKeough, indicated in his recent budget address that the Province has some distance yet to go before our economy can return to a vibrant and healthy state. He has asked his colleagues--including me--to ensure that in the internal operation of each ministry, every effort is made to secure the maximum return for each tax dollar.
>
> I am passing these messages along to you, and asking that you continue to make every effort in the future, as I know you have in the past, to exercise effective management, in recognition of these circumstances.

Yes, I am quite certain that we will have the kind of university agency to which I refer. And while the Premier may decide we need a commission beforehand as a "trial balloon" or to provide the agency with a "solid and independent" looking origin, I hope that the process bears fruit quickly before too many university programs suffer irreparable damage.

Educational Development as Saviour

Enough said about the "new reality" and a system-wide structure. What about problem-solving capabilities *within* our institutions? Where does professional development fit into the scheme of things? What can instructional development programs do to solve some of the problems we face?

Before directly answering these questions, I'd like to identify a few biases I have with respect to professional development and instructional development programs "I have known". First of all, I *do not* believe that instructional development is equivalent to any specific, observable innovation (e.g., Modules, CAI, PSI, small groups...). All too often, the implementation of an innovation, doing something "radically different," is *equal* to I.D. rather than merely being an example of it. There are a few problems with this way of looking at things. Instructional development, broadly defined, refers to any activity, change in policy, etc. the purpose of which is, the identification and solution of instructional problems, increasing student learning and enjoyment of that learning, or *maintaining* an already effective teaching-learning system. If I.D. is defined too narrowly (e.g., by the way funds are allocated, decisions made, committee membership filled...) those not involved in the "narrow" activities might not participate in the I.D. enterprise on campus.

Occasionally, the very visible innovations are poorly done (e.g., done for the sake of innovating, rather than for solving a real problem).

I.D. is guilty by association and people might feel that *I.D.* is "wasteful window-dressing" rather than seeing a particular example as, "just a bad case of I.D."

Some people feel that a few of these programs are anaologous to the oil companies which spend a lot of money advertising about what they're doing about pollution and few dollars on actually researching pollution problems. This is a bit extreme and while I do not believe that this is the intent of any program, it may be the result of some.

Secondly, professional development or instructional development *is not equivalent* to attendance at seminars, workshops, and even institutes. Real development as operationalized by the learning and use of a new skill or the reorganization of an instructional system takes place *after* or *between* the workshops and seminars and in some cases in spite of, or in lieu of, these formal experiences. How effective are these experiences in fostering new ideas, skills, and attitudes? I've been involved in, one way or another, about 200 of these types of programs and in my opinion they can be excellent in this regard. But what happens when professional development week is over? Re-entry into the college or university environment often provides a contrary and negative effect, sometimes neutral, and rarely facilitative with respect to the fresh insights obtained during a workshop on teaching or administration.

If we take a look at the clinical research or training research journals, we quickly learn that the development of many skills, techniques, and knowledge in general, is as much (or more in some cases) a function of the post-learning environment than the learning or training setting.

What we're talking about then is the larger context or environment in which professional and instructional development programs take place. How effective is this environment in facilitating the *maintenance* of a new skill or encouraging the implementation of an innovation? It is all too obvious that post-workshop occurrences such as release time, seed money for projects, merit increases and promotions for effective developmental activity, peer support, etc. are crucial.

What then does all of this mean with respect to the question I posed about the usefulness of professional and instructional development programs in solving problems created by the new reality? Absolutely nothing...unless we add a new dimension--organizational development. As you know, organizational development deals with the larger context in which we as teachers or administrators work--that pre- and post-workshop environment to which I was referring. Of concern here are problems related to organizational structure, institutional goals and priorities, departmental goals and priorities and their relationship to the institutional goals and priorities, institutional reward systems, decision-making strategies of administrators, program evaluation, curriculum development, and the like. If we want an effective program for individual and institutional renewal, if we want a system for creatively and effectively addressing the issues we face, we're really talking about Educational Development in which programs dealing with professional or staff interests and needs, programs related specifically to instructional and learning problems, and activities related to the myriad of problems which are indiginous to organization are interrelated.

This interrelatedness is crucial. Many of the professional and instructional development programs have suffered because they have become too "departmentalized." For example, if a college or university strikes a committee on goals and priorities, it is obvious to me that membership should include professional development and instructional development officers.

Let me be more specific about what I believe are a few essential characteristics of an effective program for Educational Development. I'll simply list them assuming that most are self-explanatory. Those that are not, we can deal with during the discussion period.

1. Programs for professional or staff development (which includes support staff), instructional development, and organizational development, should be part of the same administrative structure (e.g., Committee on Educational Development chaired by chief academic officer of the institution).
2. In addition, educational development programs should include people involved in student services, instructional media, continuing education, and faculty associations. (Faculty associations must understand, as many do, that professional development should be part of the collective bargaining process.)
3. Professional and instructional development goals--both individual and collective--should be congruent with institutional goals (this should be an outgrowth of #1 above).
4. Programs designed for administrators--chairpersons, deans, and the senior executives are essential.

5. An ongoing evaluation plan which monitors the effectiveness of the Educational Development program, at both the individual and institutional levels, is, of course, a must.

The underlying concept here is cooperative, "fluid," internally consistent activity at all levels of the institution. Our institutions have been suffering from a bad case of "hardening of the categories" with everybody doing their own thing to survive. "Partnership problem-solving" in higher education has never been as crucial as it is today. If we bury our heads and define long-term planning in terms of next year's budget and "who is going to teach the introductory course?" we're in trouble/

The problems of the new reality--the aging professorate, the need to retrain redundant staff, setting and achieving appropriate institutional goals in a time of restraint, designing cost-effective instructional methods--are all solvable if, as secure professionals, we engage in sound educational development. Enough for my sermon, what do you think?

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